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who recites it. In this also there is a natural reminiscence of Chaucer; and if we miss the rich minuteness of his Van Eyck painting, or the depth of his thoughtful humor, we find the same airy grace, tenderness, simple strength, and exquisite felicities of description. Nor are twinkles of sly humor wanting. The Interludes, and above all the Prelude, are masterly examples of that perfect ease of style which is, of all things, the hardest to attain. The verse flows clear and sweet as honey, and with a faint fragrance that tells, but not too plainly, of flowers that grew in many fields. We are made to feel that, however tedious the processes of culture may be, the ripe result in facile power and scope of fancy is purely delightful. We confess that we are so heartily weary of those cataclysms of passion and sentiment with which literature has been convulsed of late,—as if the main object were, not to move the reader, but to shake the house about his ears,—that the homelike quiet and beauty of such poems as these is like an escape from noise to nature.

As regards the structure of the work looked at as a whole, it strikes us as a decided fault, that the *Saga of King Olaf* is so disproportionately long, especially as many of the pieces which compose it are by no means so well done as the more strictly original ones. We have no quarrel with the foreign nature of the subject as such,—for any good matter is American enough for a truly American poet; but we cannot help thinking that Mr. Longfellow has sometimes mistaken mere strangeness for freshness, and has failed to make his readers feel the charm he himself felt. Put into English, the *Saga* seems *too* Norse; and there is often a hitchiness in the verse that suggests translation with overmuch heed for literal closeness. It is possible to assume alien forms of verse, but hardly to enter into forms of thought alien both in time and in the ethics from which they are derived. “The Building of the Long Serpent” is not to be named with Mr. Longfellow’s “Building of the Ship,” which he learned from no *Heimskringla*, but from the dockyards of Portland, where he played as a boy. We are willing, however, to pardon the parts which we find somewhat ineffectual, in favor of the “Nun of Nidaros,” which concludes, and in its gracious piety more than redeems, them all.

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12.—*In War Time, and Other Poems.* By JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1863. pp. vi, 152.

IT is a curious illustration of the attraction of opposites, that, among our elder poets, the war we are waging finds its keenest expression in the Quaker Whittier. Here is, indeed, a soldier prisoner on parole in a drab coat, with no hope of exchange, but with a heart beating time to

the tap of the drum. Mr. Whittier is, on the whole, the most American of our poets, and there is a fire of warlike patriotism in him that burns all the more intensely that it is smothered by his creed. But it is not as a singular antithesis of dogma and character that this peculiarity of his is interesting to us. The fact has more significance as illustrating how deep an impress the fathers of New England stamped upon the commonwealth they founded. Here is a descendant and member of the sect they chiefly persecuted, more deeply imbued with the spirit of the Puritans than even their own lineal representatives. The New-Englander is too strong for the sectarian, and the hereditary animosity softens to reverence, as the sincere man, looking back, conjures up the image of a sincerity as pure, though more stern, than his own. And yet the poetic sentiment of Whittier misleads him as far in admiration, as the pitiful snobbery of certain renegades perverts them to depreciation, of the Puritans. It is not in any sense true that these pious and earnest men brought with them to the New World the deliberate forethought of the democracy which was to develop itself from their institutions. They brought over its seed, but unconsciously, and it was the kindly nature of the soil and climate that was to give it the chance to propagate and disperse itself. The same conditions have produced the same results also at the South, and nothing but slavery blocks the way to a perfect sympathy between the two sections.

Mr. Whittier is essentially a lyric poet, and the fervor of his temperament gives his pieces of that kind a remarkable force and effectiveness. Twenty years ago many of his poems were in the nature of *conclaves ad populum*, vigorous stump-speeches in verse, appealing as much to the blood as the brain, and none the less convincing for that. By regular gradations ever since his tone has been softening and his range widening. As a poet he stands somewhere between Burns and Cowper, akin to the former in patriotic glow, and to the latter in intensity of religious anxiety verging sometimes on morbidity. His humanity, if it lack the humorous breadth of the one, has all the tenderness of the other. In love of outward nature he yields to neither. His delight in it is not a new sentiment or a literary tradition, but the genuine passion of a man born and bred in the country, who has not merely a visiting acquaintance with the landscape, but stands on terms of lifelong friendship with hill, stream, rock, and tree. In his descriptions he often catches the *expression* of rural scenery, a very different thing from the mere *looks*, with the trained eye of familiar intimacy. A somewhat shy and heretical being we take him to be, and more a student of his own heart than of men. His characters, where he introduces such, are commonly abstractions, with little of the flesh and

blood of real life in them, and this from want of experience rather than of sympathy ; for many of his poems show him capable of friendship almost womanly in its purity and warmth. One quality which we especially value in him is the intense home-feeling which, without any conscious aim at being American, gives his poetry a flavor of the soil surprisingly refreshing. Without being narrowly provincial, he is the most indigenous of our poets. In these times, especially, his uncalculating love of country has a profound pathos in it. He does not flare the flag in our faces, but one feels the heart of a lover throbbing in his anxious verse.

Mr. Whittier, if the most fervid of our poets, is sometimes hurried away by this very quality, in itself an excellence, into being the most careless. He draws off his verse while the fermentation is yet going on, and before it has had time to compose itself and clarify into the ripe wine of expression. His rhymes are often faulty beyond the most provincial license even of Burns himself. Vigor without elegance will never achieve permanent success in poetry. We think, also, that he has too often of late suffered himself to be seduced from the true path to which his nature set up finger-posts for him at every corner, into metaphysical labyrinths whose clew he is unable to grasp. The real life of his genius smoulders into what the woodmen call a *smudge*, and gives evidence of itself in smoke instead of flame. Where he follows his truer instincts, he is often admirable in the highest sense, and never without the interest of natural thought and feeling naturally expressed.

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13.— *Alice of Monmouth; an Idyl of the Great War. With other Poems.* By EDMUND C. STEDMAN. New York: Carleton. 1864. pp. 151.

READERS of this little volume will desire to possess themselves at once of a former one by the same author, which they will find advertised on the fly-leaf. The leading poem has great and substantial merits, not the least of which we reckon to be that it is really interesting. It is not only American, but contemporaneously so in its scenery and incidents ; while a hearty patriotism without bravado gives it a peculiar claim upon our liking. There may be here and there a reminiscence of "Maud," that most intensely characteristic of modern poems, but this is only in the externals of structure and versification. The vitalizing elements of the poem are its own, and it is a true birth of the author's mind, not an artificially congested *poemunculus*. The scene is laid in New Jersey, and the accessories of landscape and manners are in as